بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

كتب على نفسه الرحمة

ISLAM AND PEACE

Dr Ibrahim Kalin

MABDA

English Monograph Series – Book No. 11

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

كتب على نفسه الرحمة

He hath prescribed for Himself mercy

Qur’an
Al-An`am, 6:12

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Contents

Is Religion a Source of Violence?

This question haunts the minds of many people concerned about religion in one way or another. For the critics of religion, the answer is usually in the affirmative, and it is easy to cite examples from history. From Rene Girard's depiction of ritual sacrifices as violent proclivities in religions[1] to the exclusivist claims of different faith traditions, one can easily conclude that religions produce violence at both social and theological levels. As often done, one may take the Crusades or the inquisition in medieval Europe or jihad movements in Islamic history and describe the respective histories of these traditions as nothing more than a history of war, conflict, violence, schism, persecution. The premeditated conclusion is unequivocal: the more religious people are, the more violent they tend to be. The solution therefore lies in the de-sacralization of the world. Religions, and some among them in particular, need to be

1 Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, translated by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1979).

secularized and modernized to rid themselves of their violent essence and violent legacy.[2]

At the other end of the spectrum is the believer who sees religious violence as an oxymoron at best and the mutilation of his/her religious faith at worst. Religions do not call for violence. Religious teachings are peaceful at their base, meant to re-establish the primordial harmony between heaven and earth, between the Creator and the created. But specific religious teachings and feelings are manipulated to instigate violence for political gains. Violence is committed in the name of religion but not condoned by it. The only valid criticism the secularist can raise against religion is that religions have not developed effective ways of protecting themselves from such manipulations and abuses. As Juergensmeyer has shown in his extensive survey of religious violence in the modern period, violence does not recognize religious and cultural boundaries and can easily find a home in the most sublime and innocuous teachings of world reli-

2 This is the gist of Bernard Lewis' attacks on "Islamic fundamentalism" in a number of highly publicized essays including "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990), pp. 47-60 and "Islam and Liberal Democracy", *The Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1993). Lewis considers "Islamic fundamentalism", which he equates occasionally with terrorism, as arising out of the overtly religious and intolerant traditions of Islam. I have dealt with Lewis' arguments in my "Roots of Misconception: Euro-American Perceptions of Islam Before and After 9/11" in Joseph Lumbard (ed.), *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), pp. 143-187.

gions[3]. At any rate, religions are vulnerable when they fail to find ways of preventing the use of force in their names. This becomes especially acute when they fall short of inculcating a consciousness of peace and non-violence in the minds and hearts of their followers. In short, religions *per se* cannot be seen as a source of violence. Only some of its bad practitioners can be held accountable.

Both views have strong cases and make important points about religion and violence. Both, however, are equally mistaken in resorting to a fixed definition of religion. And both views reduce the immense variety of religious practices to a particular tradition and, furthermore, to a particular faction or historic moment in that tradition. In speaking of Islam and violence or Hinduism and war, the usual method is to look at the sacred scriptures and compare and contrast them with historical realities that flow from their practice, or lack thereof. We highlight those moments where there are discrepancies between text and history as the breaking points in the history of that religion, viz., moments when the community has not lived up to the standards of the religion as demanded by the text.

Although there is some benefit to be gained from this approach, it fails to see the ways in which religious texts are

3 Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence (Berkeley and New York): Univeristy of California Press, 2000)

interpreted and made part of the day-to-day experience of particular religious communities. Instead of looking at how religiously binding texts are read, revealed and enriched within the concrete experiences of the community, we separate text from history and somehow assume historical immunity for the text and/or textual basis for *all* history.

This is not to deny the centrality of the scripture. In the case of Islam, the Qur'an, together with the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam, is and remains the main source of the Islamic *Weltanschauung*. After all, the numerous interpretations that we may talk about are interpretations of the Qur'an, the one text that is the subject of variant readings from the Sufis and Hanbalis to the Wahhabis and the modernists. The fact that the Prophetic sunnah is part of the Islamic worldview and religious life, without which we cannot understand a good part of the Qur'an, can be seen as confirming the significance of reading the scripture within the concrete experiences of the Muslim community. This was in fact how first Muslims, who became the spiritual and moral examples of later generations, learnt about the Qur'an under the guidance and tutorship of the Prophet.

In this sense, Islamic history is not alien to the idea of reading religiously binding texts primarily within the context of a living and 'evolving' tradition. This is why the Sunnah was part of the Islamic law from the outset and this is how the tradition of transmitted sciences (*al-'ulum al-naqliyyah*), dealing primarily with 'religious sciences', came

about, viz., by looking at how the previous generations of Muslims understood the Qur'an and the hadith. Taken out of this context, Qur'anic verses become abstruse, abstract, and impenetrable for the non-Muslim, or for anyone, who is indifferent to this tradition and, by virtue of this, may be misled into thinking that a good part of Islamic history has come about in spite of the Qur'an, not because of it.

I deemed it necessary to insert these few words of caution and 'methodology' here for the following reasons. Much of the current debate about Islam and violence is beset by the kind of problems that we see in the secularist and apologetic readings of the scriptural sources of Islam. Those who consider Islam as a religion that essentially condones violence for its theological beliefs and political aims pick certain verses from the Qur'an, link them to cases of communal and political violence in Islamic history, and conclude that Qur'anic teachings provide justification for unjust use of violence. While the same can be done practically about any religion, Islam has enjoyed much more fanfare than any other religion for the last thousand years or so. The apologist makes the same mistake but in a different way when he rejects all history as misguided, failing to see the ways in which the Qur'an, or the Bible or the Rig-Vedas, can *easily*, if not legitimately, be read to resort to violence for intra- and inter-

religious violence. This is where the hermeneutics of the text (in the sense of both *tafsir* and *ta'wil*) becomes absolutely necessary: it is not that the text itself is violent but that it lends itself to multiple readings, some of which are bound to be peaceful and some violent.

The second problem is the exclusive focus of the current literature on the legal and juristic aspects of peace and violence in Islam. Use of violence, conduct of war, treatment of combatants and prisoners of war, international law, etc. are discussed within a strictly legal context, and the classical Islamic literature on the subject is called upon to provide answers. Although this is an important and useful exercise, it falls short of addressing deeper philosophical and spiritual issues that must be included in any discussion of religion and peace. This is true especially in the case of Islam for mainly two reasons. First of all, the legal views of peace and violence in the classical period were articulated and applied in the light of the overall teachings and aims of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*). The *maqasid* provided a context within which the strict legality of the law was blended into the necessities and realities of communal life. Political conflicts couched in the language of juridical edicts remained as political conflicts and were never extended to a war of religions between Islam or Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or African religions, which Muslims encountered throughout their history. It should come to us as no surprise that the fatwa of a jurist of a particular school of law allowing the

use of force against a Christian ruler was not interpreted as an excuse for attacking one's Christian or Jewish neighbor.

Secondly, the spiritual and ethical teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah underpin everything Islamic *in principle,* and this applies *mutatis mutandis* to the question of peace and violence. The legal injunctions (*ahkam*) of the Qur'an concerning peace and war are part of a larger set of spiritual and moral principles. The ultimate goal of Islam is to create a moral and just society in which individuals can pursue a spiritual life and the toll of living collectively, from economic exploitation and misuse of political authority to the suppression of other people, can be brought under control to the extent possible in any human society. Without taking into account this larger picture, we will fail to see how Islam advocates a positive concept of peace as opposed to a merely negative one and how its political and legal precepts, which are exploited so wildly and irrationally by both the secular and religious fundamentalists of our day, lead to the creation and sustaining of a just and ethical social order.

With these caveats in mind, this paper has two interrelated goals. The first is to analyze the ways in which the Islamic tradition can be said to advocate a positive concept of peace. This will be contrasted with 'negative peace' defined conventionally as absence of war and conflict. It will be argued that positive peace involves the *presence* of certain qualities and conditions that aim to make peace a principal *state* of harmony and equilibrium rather than a mere *event*

of political settlement. This requires a close examination of the philosophical assumptions of the Islamic tradition which have shaped the experience of Muslim societies vis-à-vis the peoples of other faiths and cultures. These philosophical suppositions are naturally grounded in the ethical and spiritual teachings of Islam, and without considering their relevance for the cultural and political experience of Muslims with the 'other', we can neither do justice to the Islamic tradition, which spans through a vast area in both space and time, nor avoid the pitfalls of historical reductionism and essentialism, which is so rampant in the current discussions of the subject.

This brings us to the second goal of the paper. Here I will argue that an adequate analysis of peace and war in the Islamic tradition entails more than fixating the views of some Muslim jurists of the 9th and 10th centuries as the definitive position of 'orthodox' Islam and thus reducing the Islamic *modus operandi* of dealing with non-Muslims to a concept of 'holy war'. With some exceptions[4], the ever growing literature of Islam and peace has been concerned predominantly with the legal aspects of declaring war ('jihad') against Muslim and/or non-Muslim states, treating the dhimmis under

4 One such exception to the rule is Richard Martin's essay "The Religious Foundations of War, Peace, and Statecraft in Islam" in John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson (eds.), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 91-117.

the Shari'ah, and expanding the territories of the Islamic state. This has obscured, to say the least, the larger context within which such legal opinions were discussed, interpreted and evolved from one century to the other and from one cultural-political era to the other.

Therefore I propose to look at the concept of peace in the Islamic tradition in four interrelated contexts. The first is the metaphysical-spiritual context in which peace (*salam*) as one of the names of God is seen as an essential part of God's creation and assigned a substantive value. The second is the philosophical-theological context within which the question of evil (*shar*) is addressed as a cosmic, ethical, and social problem. Discussions of theodicy among Muslim theologians and philosophers provide one of the most profound analyses of the question of evil, injustice, mishap, violence and their place in the 'great chain of being'. I shall provide a brief summary to show how a proper understanding of peace in the Islamic tradition is bound to take us to the larger questions of good and evil. The third is the political-legal context, which is the proper locus of classical legal and juristic discussions of war, rebellion, oppression, and political (dis) order. This area has been the exclusive focus of the current literature on the subject and promises to be an engaging and long-standing debate in the Muslim world. The fourth is the socio-cultural context, which would reveal the parameters of the Muslim experience of religious and cultural diversity with communities of other faiths and cultural traditions.

As it will become clear in the following pages, all of these levels are interdependent and call for a larger context within which the questions of peace and violence have been articulated and negotiated by a multitude of scholars, philosophers, jurists, mystics, political leaders, and various Muslim communities. The Islamic tradition provides ample material for contemporary Muslim societies to deal with issues of peace, religious diversity and social justice, all of which, needless to say, require urgent attention. Furthermore, the present challenge of Muslim societies is not only to deal with these issues as internal affairs but also to contribute to the fostering of a global culture of peace and coexistence. Before turning to the Islamic tradition, however, a few words of definition are in order to clarify the meaning of positive peace.

Peace as a Substantive Value

Peace as a substantive and positive concept entails the presence of certain conditions that make it an enduring *state* of harmony, integrity, contentment, equilibrium, repose, and moderation. This can be contrasted with negative peace that denotes the absence of conflict and discord. Even though negative peace is indispensable to prevent communal violence, border disputes or international conflicts, substantive-positive peace calls for a comprehensive outlook to address the deeper causes of conflict, hate, strife, destruction, brutality, and violence. As Lee states, it also provides a genuine measure and set of values by which peace and justice can be established beyond the short-term interests of individual, communities or states.[5] This is critical for the construction of peace as a substantive value because defining peace as the privation of violence and conflict turns it into a concept that is instrumental and accidental at best, and relative and irrelevant at worst. In addition, the positive-

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5 Cf. Steven Lee, "A Positive Concept of Peace" in Peter Caws (ed.), *The Causes of Quarrel: Essays on Peace, War, and Thomas Hobbes* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 183-4.

substantive notion of peace shifts the focus from preventing conflict, violence, and strife to a willingness to generate balance, justice, cooperation, dialogue, and coexistence as the primary terms of a discourse of peace. Instead of defining peace with what it is not and force common sense logic to its limit, we may well opt for generating a philosophical ground based on the presence and endurance, rather than absence, of certain qualities and conditions that make peace a substantive reality of human life.[6]

Furthermore, relegating the discourse of peace to social conflict and its prevention runs the risk of neglecting the individual, which is the *sine qua non* of collective and communal peace. This is where the 'spiritual individualism' of Islam versus its social collectivism enters the picture: the individual must be endowed with the necessary qualities that make peace an enduring reality not only in the public sphere but also in the private domain of the individual. The Qur'anic ideal of creating a beautiful soul that is at peace with itself and the larger reality of which it is a part brings ethics and spirituality right into the heart of the discourse of positive peace. Peace as a substantive value thus extends to the domain of both ethics and aesthetics for it is one of the conditions that bring about peace in the soul and resists the temptations of discord, restlessness, ugliness, pettiness,

6 Gray Cox, "The Light at the End of the Tunnel and the Light in Which We May Walk: Two Concepts of Peace" in Caws, *ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

and vulgarity. At this point, we may remember that the key Qur'anic term *ihsan* carries the meanings of virtue, beauty, goodness, comportment, proportion, comeliness, and 'doing what is beautiful' all at once. The active particle *muhsin* denotes the person who does what is good, desired, and beautiful.[7]

In this regard, peace is not a mere state of passivity. On the contrary, it is being fully active against the menace of evil, destruction, and turmoil that may come from within or from without. As Collingwood points out, peace is a 'dynamic thing',[8] and requires consciousness and vigilance, a constant state of awareness that one must engage in spiritual and intellectual *jihad* to ensure that differences and conflicts within and across the collective traditions do not become grounds for violence and oppression. Furthermore, positive peace involves the analysis of various forms of aggression including individual, institutional and structural violence.

Peace as a substantive concept is also based on justice (*'adl*) for peace is predicated upon the availability of equal rights and opportunities for all to realize their goals and po-

7 The celebrated *hadith jibril* confirms the same Qur'anic usage: "*Ihsan* is to worship God as if you were to see Him; even if you see Him not, he sees you". For an extensive analysis of ihsan as articulated in the Islamic tradition, see Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1998), pp. 265-317.

8 R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1971), p. 334.

tentials. One of the meanings of the word justice in Arabic is to be 'straight' and 'equitable', i.e., to be straightforward, trustworthy, and fair in one's dealings with others.[9] Such an attitude brings about a state of balance, accord, and trust, and goes beyond the limits of formal justice dispensed by the juridical system. Defined in the broadest terms, justice encompasses a vast domain of relations and interactions from taking care of one's body to international law. Like peace, justice is one of the Divine names and takes on a substantive importance in view of its central role in Islamic theology as well as law. Peace can be conceived as an enduring state of harmony, trust, and coexistence only when coupled and supported with justice because it also means being secure from all that is morally evil and destructive.[10] Thus the Qur'an combines justice with *ihsan* when it commands its followers to act with ﴾*justice and good manner* (*bi'l-'adl wa'l-ihsan*)﴿ (Al-Nahl, 16:90).[11]

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9 Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'arab*, XIII, pp. 457-8 and al-Tahanawi, *Kashshaf istilahat al-funun* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), III, pp. 288-9.

10 Cf. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 179, n. 46 commenting on the Qur'an 6:54: "And when those who believe in Our messages come unto thee, say: "Peace be upon you. Your Sustainer has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy so that if any of you does a bad deed out of ignorance, and thereafter repents and lives righteously, He shall be [found] much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace".

11 On the basis of this verse, the 10th century philologist Abu Hilal al-'Askari considers justice and *ihsan* as synonyms. Cf. his *al-Furuq al-lughawiyyah*, p. 194, quoted in Franz Rosenthal, "Political Justice and

The Spiritual-Metaphysical Context: God as Peace (*Al-Salam*)

The conditions that are conducive to a state of peace mentioned above are primarily spiritual and have larger implications for the cosmos, the individual, and society. Here I shall focus on three premises that are directly relevant to our discussion. The first pertains to peace as a Divine name (*Al-Salam*) (Al-Hashr, 59:23). The Qur'anic concept of God is founded upon a robust monotheism, and God's transcendence (*tanzih*) is emphasized in both the canonical sources and in the intellectual tradition. To this absolutely one and transcendent God belong ﴾*all the beautiful names*﴿ (Al-A'raf, 7:180, Al-Hashr, 59:24), i.e., the names of beauty (*jamal*), majesty (*jalal*), and perfection (*kamal*). It is these names that prevent God from becoming an utterly unreachable and "wholly other" deity. Divine names represent God's face turned towards the world and

the Just Ruler" in Joel Kraemer and Ilai Alon (eds.), *Religion and Government in the World of Islam* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1983), p. 97, n. 20.

are the vessels of finding God in and through His creation.

The names of beauty take precedence over the names of majesty because God says that ﴾*my mercy has encompassed everything*﴿ (Al-A'raf, 7: 156) and ﴾*God has written mercy upon Himself*﴿ (Al-An'am, 6:12,54). This is also supported by a famous hadith of the Prophet according to which "God is beautiful and loves beauty". In this sense, God is as much transcendent, incomparable and beyond as He is immanent, comparable (*tashbih*) and close.[12] As the ultimate source of peace, God transcends all opposites and tensions, is the permanent state of repose and tranquility, and calls His servants to the ﴾abode of peace (*dar al-salam*)﴿ (Yunus, 10:25). ﴾*It is He who from high on has sent [sends] down inner peace and repose (sakinah) upon the hearts of the believers*﴿, says the Qur'an (Al-Fath, 48:4). The proper abode of peace is the

12 Like other Sufis, Ghazali subscribes to the notion of what Ibn al-'Arabi would later call the "possessor of the two eyes" (*dhu'l-'aynayn*), viz., seeing God with the two eyes of transcendence (*tanzih*) and immanence (*tashbih*). Cf. Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), pp. 8-10 and 51-5. For Ibn al-'Arabi's expression of the "possessor of the two eyes", see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 361-2. The Mutazilite and Ash'arite theologians have a long history of controversy over the three major views of Divine names and qualities, i.e., *tanzih, tashbih*, and *ta'til* ('suspension'). Cf. Michel Allard, *Le problème des attributes divins dans la doctrine d'al-Aš'ari et des ses premiers grands disciples* (Beyrouth: Editions De L'Impirimerie Catholique, 1965), pp. 354-364.

hearts (*qulub*), which are ﴾*satisfied only by the remembrance of God (dhikr Allah)*﴿ (Al-Ra'd, 13:28). By linking the heart, man's center, to God's remembrance, the Qur'an establishes a strong link between theology and spiritual psychology.

In addition to the Qur'anic exegetes, the Sufis in particular are fond of explaining the 'mystery of creation' by referring to a 'sacred saying' (*hadith qudsi*) attributed to the Prophet of Islam: "I was a hidden treasure. I wanted (lit. 'loved') to be known and created the universe (lit. 'creation'[13])". The key words 'love' (*hubb, mahabbah*) and 'know' (*ma'rifah*) underlie a fundamental aspect of the Sufi metaphysics of creation: Divine love and desire to be known is the *raison d'etre* of all existence. Ibn al-'Arabi says that God's "love for His servants is identical with the origination of their engendered existence ... the relation of God's love to them is the same as the fact that He is with them wherever they are (Al-Hadid, 57:4), whether in the state of their nonexistence or the state of their *wujud* ... they are the objects of His knowledge. He witnesses them and loves them never-endingly".[14] Commenting on the above saying, Dawud al-Qaysari, the 14th century Turkish Sufi-philosopher and the first university president of the newly established Ot-

13 'Ali b.Sultan Muhammad al-Harawi al-Qari, al-Masnu' fi Ma'rifat al-hadith al-Mawdu' (Al-Riyad: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1404 AH), 1:141.

14 Quoted in William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 22.

toman State, says that "God has written love upon Himself. There is no doubt that the kind of love that is related to the manifestation of [His] perfections follows from the love of His Essence, which is the source of the love of [His Names and] Qualities that have become the reason for the unveiling of all existents and the connection of the species of spiritual and corporeal bodies".[15]

The second premise is related to what traditional philosophy calls 'the great chain of being' (*da'irat al-wujud*). In the cosmic scale of things, the universe is the 'best of all possible worlds' because, first, it is actual, which implies completion and plenitude over and against potentiality, and, second, its built-in order derives its sustenance from the Creator. The natural world is in a constant state of peace because according to the Qur'an it is 'muslim' (with a small m) in that it surrenders (*taslim*) itself to the will of God and thus rises above all tension and discord (Aal 'Imran, 3:83, Al-Tawbah, 9:53, Al-Ra'd, 13:15, Fussilat, 41:11). In its normative depiction of natural phenomena, the Qur'an talks about stars and trees as ﴾*prostrating before God*﴿ (Al-Rahman, 55:6) and says that ﴾*all that is in the heavens and on earth extols His glory*﴿ (Al-Hashr, 59:24). By acknowledging God's unity and praising His name, man joins the natural world in a substantive way

15 Dawud al-Qaysari, *Risalah fi ma'rifat al-mahabbat al-haqiqiyyah* in *al-Rasa'il* ed. by Mehmet Bayraktar (Kayseri: Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality, 1997), p. 138.

– a process that underscores the essential link between the *anthropos* and the *cosmos* or the microcosm and the macrocosm. The intrinsic commonality and unity between the human as 'subject' and the universe as 'object' has been called the "anthropocosmic vision".[16] The thrust of this view is that the *anthropos* and the *cosmos* cannot be disjoined from one another and that the man-versus-nature dichotomy is a false one. Moreover, the world has been given to the children of Adam as a 'trust' (*amanah*) as they are charged with the responsibility of standing witness to God's creation, mercy, and justice on earth. Conceiving nature in terms of harmony, measure, order, and balance points to a common and persistent attitude towards the non-human world in Islamic thought, and has profound implications for the construction of peace as a principle of the cosmos.[17]

The third principle pertains to man's natural state and his place within the larger context of existence. Even though the Qur'an occasionally describes the fallen nature of man in gruesome terms and presents man as weak, forgetful,

16 The term has first been used by Mircea Eliade and adopted by Tu Weiming to describe the philosophical outlook of the Chinese traditions. For an application of the term to Islamic thought, see William Chittick, "The Anthropocosmic Vision in Islamic Thought" in Ted Peters, Muzaffar Iqbal, Syed Nomanul Haq (eds.), *God, Life, and the Cosmos* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). pp. 125-152

17 Cf. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 60-63.

treacherous, hasty, ignorant, ungrateful, hostile, and egotistic (cf., *inter alia*, Ibrahim, 14:34, Al-Isra', 17:11, Al-Kahf, 18:54, Al-Hajj, 22:66, Al-Ahzab, 33:72, Al-Zukhruf, 43:15, and Al-'Adiyat, 100:6), these qualities are eventually considered deviations from man's essential nature (*fitrah*), who has been created in the ﴾*most beautiful form* (*ahsan taqwim*)﴿ (Al-Tin, 95:4), both physically and spiritually. This metaphysical optimism defines human beings as ﴾*God's vicegerent on earth* (*khalifat Allah fi'l-ard*)﴿ as the Qur'an says, or, to use a metaphor from Christianity, as the "pontifex", the bridge between heaven and earth.[18] The ﴾*fitrah*﴿ (Al-Rum, 30:30), the primordial nature according to which God has created all humanity, is essentially a moral and spiritual substance drawn to the good and ﴾*God-consciousness* (*taqwa*)﴿ whereas its imperfections and ﴾*excessiveness (fujur)*﴿ (Al-Shams, 91:8) are 'accidental' qualities to be subsumed under the soul's struggle to do good (*al-birr*) and transcend its subliminal desires through his intelligence and moral will.

18 The classical Quran commentaries are almost unanimous on interpreting this 'khalifah' as Adam, i.e., humans in the generic sense. Cf. Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1995), p. 6 and Ibn al-'Arabi, *al-Futuhat al-makkiyyah*, ed. by M. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mar'ashli, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1997), Vol. I, p. 169.

The Philosophical-Theological Context: Evil and the Best of All Possible Worlds

In the context of theology and philosophy, questions of peace and violence are treated under the rubric of good and evil (*husn/khayr* and *sharr/qubh*). War, conflict, violence, injustice, discord, and the like are seen as extensions of the general problem of evil. The Muslim philosophers and theologians have been interested in theodicy from the very beginning, and for good reasons because the basic question of theodicy goes to the heart of religion: how can a just and perfect God allow evil and destruction in a world which He says He has created in perfect balance, with a purpose, and for the well-being of His servants? We can rephrase the question in the present context as follows: why is there so much violence, turmoil and oppression rather than peace, harmony and justice in the world? Does evil, of which violence is as an offshoot, belong to the essential nature of things or is it an accident that arises only as the privation of goodness?

These questions have given rise to a long and interesting debate about evil among the theologians. One particular aspect of this debate, known as the "best of all possible

worlds" (*ahsan al-nizam*) argument[19], deserves closer attention as it is relevant to the formulation of a positive concept of peace. The classical statement of the problem pertains to Divine justice and power on the one hand, and the Greek notions of potentiality and actuality, on the other. The fundamental question is whether this world in which we live is the best that God could have created. Since, from a moral point of view, the world is imperfect because there is evil and injustice in it, we have to either admit that God was not able to create a better and more perfect world or concede that He did not create a better world by will as part of the Divine economy of creation. Obviously, the first alternative calls into question God's omnipotence (*qudrah*) whereas the second jeopardizes His wisdom and justice (*'adalah*). Following another line of discussion in Kalam, we can reformulate the question as a tension between God's nature and will: can God go against His own nature, which is just, if

19 Another formulation is *laysa fi'l-imkan abda' mimma kan*. Loosely translated, it states that "there is nothing in the world of possibility more beautiful and perfect than what is in actuality". This sentence, attributed to Ghazali, has led to a long controversy in Islamic thought. For an excellent survey of this debate in Islamic theology, see Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over al-Ghazali's "Best of All Possible Worlds"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). Cf. Also Ghazali, *Ihya' 'ulum al-din*, (Cairo: 1968), Vol. IV, p. 321. The earliest formulation of the problem, however, can be traced back to Ibn Sina. See my "Why Do Animals Eat Other Animals: Mulla Sadra on Theodicy" (forthcoming).

He wants to, or His will cannot supercede His nature? Still, can God contradict Himself? If we say yes, then we attribute imperfection to God and if we say no, then we limit Him.

Even the most modest attempt to analyze these questions within the context of Kalam debates will take us too far afield. What is directly related to our discussion here is how the concepts of evil, injustice, oppression and their variations are seen as the 'accidental outcomes' of the world of contingencies in which we live. True, the weaknesses and frailties of human beings contribute enormously to the creation and exacerbation of evil, and it is only reasonable to take a 'situational' position and attribute evil to ourselves rather than to the Divine. In fact, this is what the Qur'an holds vis-à-vis evil and man's accountability: ﴾*Whatever good happens to you, it is from God; and whatever evil befalls you, it is from your own self/soul*﴿ (Al-Nisa', 4: 79; cf. also Aal-'Imran, 3:165). The best of all possible worlds argument, however, shifts the focus from particular instances of individual or structural violence to the phenomenon of evil itself whereby we gain a deeper insight into how evil arises in the first place.

We may reasonably argue that evil is part of the Divine economy of creation and thus necessary. In a moral sense, it is part of Divine economy because it is what we are tested with (cf. Al-Anbiyah, 21:36; Al-Kahf, 18:9). Without evil, there will be no accountability and thus no freedom.[20] Mulla

20 Plantinga's "free will defense" is based on this premise. Cf. Alvin

Sadra calls this a necessity of Divine providence (*al-'inayah*) and the "concomitant of the ultimate *telos* of goodness (*al-ghayat al-khayriyyah*).[21] In an ontological sense, it is a necessity because the world is by definition imperfect, the ultimate perfection belonging to God, and the world is not God. That is why God has not created "all beings as pure goodness".[22] Evil as limitation and imperfection is an outcome of the first act of separation between the Divine and the non-divine or what Muslim theologians call *ma siwa'Llah* ("all that is other than God"). Ultimately, however, ﴿*all is from God*﴾ (Al-Nisa', 4:78). This implies that evil as the "contrastive manifestation of the good"[23] ceases to be evil and contributes to the "greater good", which is what the best of all possible world argument asserts. In a rather paradoxical way, one cannot object to the existence of evil itself because it is what makes the world possible. But this does not absolve us of the moral duty of fighting against individual cases of evil. Nor does it

Plantinga, "The Free Will Defence" in *Philosophy in America*, Max Black (ed.), reprinted in Baruch A. Broody (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An Analytical Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 187. See also his "God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom" in Marilyn M. Adams and Robert M. Adams (eds.), *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 83-109.

21 Mulla Sadra, *al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyah fi'l-asfar al-'aqliyyah al-arba'ah*, (cited hereafter as *Asfar*) (Tehran, 1383, A. H.), II, 3, p. 72.

22 Ibid., p. 78.

23 Frithjof Schuon, *In the face of the Absolute* (Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1989), p. 39.

make evil an essential nature of things because it was God's decision to create the world with a meaning and purpose in the first place. In short, evil remains contingent and transient, and this assumption extends to the next world.[24]

The notion of evil as an ontological necessity-cum-contingency has important implications for how we look at the world and its 'evil' side. From a psychological point of view, the acceptance of evil as a transient yet necessary phenomenon prevents us from becoming petty and bitter in the face of all that is blemished, wicked, imperfect, and tainted.[25] It gives us a sense of moral security against the onslaught of evil, which can and must be fought with a firm belief in the ultimate supremacy of the good. It also enables us to see the world as it is and for what it is, and strive to make it a better place in terms of moral and spiritual perfection. From a religious point of view, this underscores the relative nature

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24 This is the main reason why a good number of Sufis, philosophers, and some theologians believe that the hellfire will be terminated whereas paradise will remain eternal. For the debate between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites on this issue, see Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, *Sharh al-maqasid* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1989), Vol. 5, pp. 131-140.

25 Cf. the following verses: ﴾*Man never tires of asking for the good [things of life]; and if evil fortune touches him, he abandons all hope, giving himself up to despair. Yet whenever We let him taste some of Our grace after hardship has visited him, he is sure to say, "This is but my due!" – and, "I do not think that the Last Hour will ever come: but if [it should come, and] I should indeed be brought back unto my Sustainer, then, behold, the ultimate good awaits me with Him*﴿ (Fussilat, 41: 49-50; M. Asad's translation).

of evil: something that may appear evil to us may not be evil and vice versa when everything is placed within a larger framework. Thus the Qur'an says that ﴿*it may well be that you hate a thing while it is good (khayr) for you, and it may well be that you love a thing while it is bad (sharr) for you. And God knows, and you know not*﴾ (Al-Baqarah, 2:216). Mulla Sadra applies this principle to 'natural evils', and says that even "death, corruption (*al-fasad*) and the like are necessary and needed for the order of the world (*al-nizam*) when they occur "by nature and not by force or accident".[26]

The best of all possible worlds argument is also related to the scheme of actuality and potentiality which the Muslim philosophers and theologians have adopted from Aristotle. The argument goes as follows. This world in which we live is certainly one of the possibilities that the Divine has brought into actuality. In this sense, the world is pure contingency (*imkan*) and hung between existence and non-existence. From the point of view of its present actuality, however, the world is perfect and necessary because actuality implies plenitude and perfection whereas potentiality is privation and non-existence.[27] The sense of perfection in this context

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26 Sadra, *Asfar*, II, 3, pp. 92-3; also p. 77.

27 Cf. Plotinus, The *Enneads*, V, IX, 5, p. 248, and Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, I, 3, pp. 343-4. Baqillani considers the potential (*bi'l-quwwah*) as non-existent. See his *Kitab al-tawhid*, p. 34-44, quoted in Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 216.

is both ontological and cosmological. It is ontological because existence is superior to non-existence and whatever is in the sphere of potentiality remains so until it is brought into actuality by an agent which itself is already actual. It is cosmological because, as stated before, the world has been created with care, order, and beauty, which the Qur'an invites its readers to look at as the signs of God (*ayat Allah* or *vestigia Dei* as it was called by the Scholastics). The perfect state of the cosmos is presented as a model for the establishment of a just social order. It then follows that evil is a phenomenon of this world but not something that defines the essential nature of things.

An important outcome of this point of view is to identify evil as a rationally discernible phenomenon. This may appear to be a simple truism. Nevertheless, it is a powerful position against the notion of evil as a mysterious, mythical or even cosmological fact over which human beings have no control. Evil is something that can be discerned by the intellect and correct reasoning and, of course, with the help of the revelation[28], and this places tremendous responsibil-

28 As the "leader of the skeptics" (*imam al-mushakkikin*), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi disagrees. His objection, however, clarifies another aspect of the discussion of theodicy in Islam. As Razi points out, there is no dispute over the fact that some actions are good and some others bad. The question is "whether this is because of an attribute that belongs [essentially] to the action itself or this is not the case and it is solely as an injunction of the Shari'ah [that actions and things are good or bad]". Razi hastens

ity on our shoulders vis-à-vis the evil that may come from within or from without. One may disagree with Mutazilite theologians for pushing the sovereignty of human freedom to the point of endangering God's omniscience and omnipotency. In fact, this was what had prompted al-Ash'ari, once a Mu'tazilite himself, to carry out his own *i'tizal* and lay the foundations of Asha'rism. He and his followers believed that good and evil were ultimately determined by the Divine law (*al-shari'ah*), leaving no space for the independent judgment of human reason (*al-'aql*). Paradoxically, however, the moral voluntarism of the Ash'arites agrees with Mutazilite rationalism in underscoring the relative and contingent nature of evil: whether determined by reason or revelation, evil is the privation of good and does not represent the essential nature of things.

The Muslim philosophers assert the same point through what we might call the ontological argument. In addition to the fact that actuality is perfection over potentiality, existence (*al-wujud*) is pure goodness (*khayr mahd, summun*

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to add that the Mu'tazilites opt the first view and "our path", i.e., the Asha'rites believe in the second. Cf. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *al-Arba'in fi usul al-din* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyyah, 1986), Vol. I, p. 346. For a defense of the same Ash'arite position, see Taftazani, *Sharh al-maqasid*, Vol. 4, p. 282 where it is asserted that human reason is in no place to judge what is good (*al-husn*) and what is evil (*al-qubh*). For Sabziwari's defense of the Mutazilites, the philosophers, and the "Imamiyyah" on the rationality of good and evil, see his gloss on Sadra's *Asfar*, II, 3, pp. 83-4.

bonum). All beings that exist partake of this ontological goodness. Since God is the only Necessary being (*wajib al-wujud*) by its essence and "in all regards", this perfection ultimately belongs to Him. According to Ibn Sina, evil has no enduring essence and appears only as the privation (*'adam*) of goodness:

> Every being that is necessary by itself is pure goodness and pure perfection. Goodness (*al-khayr*), in short, is that which everything desires and by which everything's being is completed. But evil has no essence; it is either the nonexistence of a substance or the nonexistence of the state of goodness (*salah*) for a substance. Thus existence is pure goodness, and the perfection of existence is the goodness of existence. Existence is pure goodness when it is not accompanied by nonexistence, the nonexistence of a substance, or the nonexistence of something from that substance and it is in perpetual actuality. As for the existent contingent by itself, it is not pure goodness because its essence does not necessitate its existence by itself. Thus its essence allows for nonexistence. Anything that allows for nonexistence in some respect is not free from evil and imperfection in all respects. Hence pure goodness is nothing but existence that is

necessary by its own essence.[29]

Elaborating on the same idea, Mulla Sadra argues that good and evil cannot be regarded opposites for "one is the nonexistence of the other; therefore goodness is existence or the perfection of existence and evil is the absence of existence or the nonexistence of the perfection of existence".[30] By defining good and evil in terms of existence and nonexistence, Sadra shifts the focus from a moralistic to a primarily ontological framework. Like Ibn Sina, Sadra defines goodness as the essential nature of the present world-order for it is an existent, viz., something positive. This leads Sadra to conclude that goodness permeates the world-order at its foundation. In spite of the existence of such natural evils as death and famine, "what is more and permanent is the desired goodness in nature".[31] Once evil is relativized, it is easier to defend this world as the best of all possible worlds. This is what Sadra does when he says that "the universe in *its*

29 Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-najat*, ed. by Majid Fakhry (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1985), p. 265; cf. also Ibn Sina, al-*Mubahathat*, ed. by Muhsin Bidarfar (Qom: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1413 AH), p. 301.

30 Sadra, *Asfar*, II, 1, p. 113.

31 *Asfar*, II, 3, p. 76. The intrinsic goodness of things in their natural-ontological state has given rise to a number of popular formulations of the problem, the most celebrated one being Merkez Efendi, the famous Ottoman scholar. When asked if he would change anything were he to have the 'center' of the world at his hands, he replied that he would leave everything as it is, hence the name 'merkez' (center).

totality (*bi-kulliyatihi*) is the most perfect of all that may be and the most noble of all that can be conceived".[32]

32 Sadra, Asfar, III, 2, pp. 114. See also ibid. II, 2, p. 114, III, 1, p. 256, III, 2, pp. 106-134. Sadra employs two arguments to defend the best of all possible worlds argument, which he calls the 'ontological' (*inni*) and 'causal' (*limmi*) methods (*manhaj*).

The Political-Legal Context: Law and Its Vicissitudes

The Shari'ah rules concerning war, peace, jihad, religious minorities, and the religio-political divisions of *dar al-islam*, *dar al-sulh/'ahd*, and *dar al-harb* constitute an important component of the Islamic law of nations. Their contextual and historical interpretation presents a significant challenge to the modern scholars of Islam on the one hand, and the Muslims themselves, on the other. In analyzing the views of the jurists on these issues from the 2nd Islamic century onward, an extremely common tendency is to fixate specific legal rulings by certain jurists as the 'orthodox' view of Islam applicable to all times and places. While it is granted that Islamic law is based on the ultimate authority of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the Shari'ah as legal code is structured in such a way as to allow considerable freedom and leeway for Muslim scholars and communities to adjust themselves to different times and circumstances. The early generations of Muslim scholars, jurists (*fuqaha*), Qur'anic commentators (*mufassirun*), traditionists (*muhaddithun*), and historians have made extensive use of this simple fact,

paving the way for the rise and flourishing of various schools of law and legal opinions in Islam. This 'adoptionist' and resilient nature of the Shari'ah, however, has been grossly overlooked and understated not only in Western scholarship but also in the Islamic world. In the present context, this has led to the oft-repeated conclusion that the teachings of the Shari'ah and, by derivation, Islam itself do not warrant a substantive notion of peace and a culture of coexistence.[33]

To analyze the legal-political aspects of traditional Shari'ah rulings concerning war and peace, I shall limit myself to three interrelated issues. The first is the Muslim community's right to defend itself against internal or external aggression and the transition of the first Muslim community from the overt 'pacifism' of Mecca to the 'activism' of Madinah. This issue necessarily raises the question of jihad as an offensive or defensive war and its relation to what is called *jus ad bellum* in the Western tradition. The second is the political context of the legal injunctions of certain jurists, namely Imam Shafi'i (d. 820) and the Hanafi jurist Sarakhsi (d. 1090), concerning the legitimacy of the territorial expansion of Muslim states on religious grounds. Some contemporary scholars have disproportionately overstated Shafi'i's

33 This is what Tibi claims in his essentialist generalizations and oversimplifications about the Islamic pathos of peace and war. Cf. Bassam Tibi, "War and Peace in Islam" in *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspectives*, ed. by Terry Nardin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 128-145.

justificatory remarks about launching jihad against non-Muslim territories on the basis of their belief system. The third issue is the treatment of religious minorities, i.e., the dhimmis under the Islamic law and its relevance for religious diversity and cultural pluralism in the Islamic tradition.

To begin with the first, a major concern of the Prophet of Islam in Mecca was to ensure the security and integrity of the nascent Muslim community as a religio-political unit. This concern eventually led to the historic migration of the Prophet and his followers to Madina in 622 after a decade of pressure, sanctions, persecution, torture, and a foiled attempt to kill the Prophet himself. During this period, the community's right to defend itself against the Meccan polytheists was mostly exercised in what we would call today pacifist and non-violent means of resistance. Even though the Prophet was in close contact with the Meccan leaders to spread his message as well as to protect his small yet highly dedicated group of followers, his tireless negotiations did not mitigate the aggressive policies of Meccans against the growing Muslim community. The transition from the robust pacifism of Mecca to the political activism of Madina took place when the permission to fight was given with the verses of Al-Hajj, 22:38-40:

Verily, God will ward off [all evil] from those who attain to faith: [and] verily, God does not love any-

one who betrays his trust and is bereft of gratitude. {38} Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged – and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them – {39} those who have been driven from their homelands against all right or no other reason than their saying, "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques – in [all of] which God's name is abundantly extolled—would surely have been destroyed {40} (Al-Hajj, 22:38–40, M. Asad's translation).

This and other verses (Al-Baqarah, 2:190-3) define clearly the reasons for taking up arms to defend religious freedom and set the conditions of just war (*jus ad bellum*) in self-defense. That the verse, revealed in the first year of the Hijrah, refers to the grave wrongdoing against Muslims and their eviction from their homeland for professing the new faith confirms that the migration of the Prophet was the last stage of the forceful expulsion of the Muslim community from Mecca. This was a turning point for the attitudes and ensuing tactics of the Prophet and his followers to protect themselves against the Meccans. The subsequent battles fought between the Meccans and the Madinans from Badr to Handak until the Prophet's triumphant return to Mecca were based on the same principles of religious freedom, collective solidarity, and political unity. In addition to enunciating the condi-

tions of just war, the above verse defines religious freedom as a universal cause for all the three Abrahamic faiths. Like any other political unit, communities tied with a bond of faith have the right and, in fact, the responsibility of securing their existence and integrity against the threats of persecution and eventual extinction. As I shall discuss below, this ecumenical attitude towards the religious freedom of all faith communities was a major factor in the Prophet's signing of a number of treatises with the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians of the Arabian Peninsula as well as the treatment of religious minorities under the Shari'ah.[34]

The construction of jihad as armed struggle to expand the borders of *dar al-islam* and, by derivation, subsume all *dar al-harb* under the Islamic dominion is found in some of the jurists of the 9th and 10th centuries. Among those, we can mention Shafi'i and Sarakhsi who interpreted jihad as the duty of the Muslim ruler to fight against the lands defined as the 'territory of war'. Shafi'i formulated his expansionist theory of jihad as a religious duty at a time when Muslim states were engaged in prolonged military conflicts with

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34 Concerning the Zoroastrians and Sabeans and their being part of the People of the Book, Abu Yusuf narrates a number of traditions of the Prophet to show that they should be treated with justice and equality as the other dhimmis. The inclusion of the Zoroastrians among the dhimmis is inferred from the fact that the Prophet had collected *jizya* from the Majus of Hajar. Cf. *Taxation in Islam: Abu Yusuf's Kitab al-kharaj*, tr. by A. Ben Shemesh (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 88-9.

non-Muslim territories and had become mostly successful in extending their borders. While these jurists had justified fighting against non-Muslims on account of their disbelief (*kufr*) rather than self-defense, they were also adamant on the observation of *jus in bello* norms, i.e., avoiding excessiveness, accepting truce, sparing the lives of noncombatants, women, children, etc.[35] In spite of these conditions, the views of Shafi'i and his followers represent a shift from the Qur'anic notion of self-defense to armed struggle to bring about the conversion of non-Muslims. Having said that, two points need to be mentioned.

First of all, the views of Shafi'i and Sarakhsi do not represent the majority, let alone the 'orthodox', stance of the jurists. The common tendency to present this particular definition of jihad as the mainstream position of Islam not only disregards the views of Abu Hanifah, Malik ibn Anas, Abu Yusuf, Shaybani, Awzai, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah[36] and others but also ignores the historical and contextual nature of such juridical rulings. The same holds true for Muslim political philosophers and theologians who take a different position on the bifurcationist

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35 Some of these stipulations can be followed from Shaybani's Siyar; English translation by Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 75-94; also Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Lahore: S. Ashraf, 1961), pp. 205-8.

36 Cf. "Sulh", Encyclopedia of Islam (EI2), IX, 845a.

framework of *dar al-islam* versus *dar al-harb*.[37] Moreover, these rulings were by and large the jurists' response to the *de facto* situation of the military conquests of Muslim states rather than their cause. Certain jurists begin to stress such reconciliatory terms as *dar al-'ahd* ("the land of the covenant") and *dar al-sulh* ("the land of peace") during and after the 11th and 12th centuries when the Muslim states were confronted with political realities other than unabated conquest and resounding victories. This change in tone and emphasis, however, was not a completely novel phenomenon for the concept of *dar al-sulh* can be traced back to the treaty that the Prophet had signed with the Christian population of Najran when he was in Madina.[38] As I shall discuss below,

37 As a representative text of the Ash'arite kalam, see Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, *Sharh al-maqasid*, Vol. 5, pp. 232-320 where the long discussion of the imamate contains no references to jihad as conquering non-Muslim territories. See also Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, abridged by N. J. Dawood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 158-160 and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *al-Arba'in fi usul al-din*, Vol. 2, pp. 255-270. The Muslim philosophers, especially al-Farabi, define jihad as just war and stress the virtues of the 'city' (*madinah*) or the human habitat. Cf. Joel L. Kraemer, "The *Jihad* of the *Falasifa*", Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam, 10 (1987), p. 293 and 312. Butterworth holds the same view about al-Farabi's notion of warfare in his "Al-Farabi's Statecraft: War and the Well-Ordered Regime" in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, ed. by James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 79-100.

38 Cf. "Dar al-sulh", EI2, II, 131a.

this treaty, whose text has been preserved, lays the foundations of making peace with non-Muslim communities. In addition, the policy of giving *aman* (safe-conduct), i.e., contractual protection for non-Muslims residing or traveling in Muslim territories, was a common practice. Such people were known as *musta'min*, and to grant them this status was not only the prerogative of head of state or *ulama* but also individuals, both men and women.[39]

Secondly, the idea of bringing the world under the reign of *dar al-islam* by military means and territorial expansion should be seen within the context of the geo-political conditions of the classical Islamic world. The medieval imperial world order, of which Muslim states were a part, was based on the idea of continuously expanding one's borders because 'conquest' (*fath*) provided economic, political and demographic stability. In this sense, as Hitti points out, "the Islam that conquered the northern regions was not the Islamic religion but the Islamic state ... it was Arabianism and not Muhammadanism that triumphed first".[40] In a world in which one was either a 'conqueror' or 'conquered', the

39 Shaybani, *Siyar*, pp. 158-194; also "Aman", EI2, I, 429a.

40 Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 145. Dozy makes a similar point when he says that "the holy war is never imposed except only when the enemies of Islam are the aggressors. Otherwise, if we take into account the injunctions of the Qur'an, it is nothing but an interpretation of some theologians". R. Dozy, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'Islamisme* (Leiden: Brill, 1879), p. 152.

triumphant Muslim states depended heavily on the expansion of their territories against both their Muslim rivals and non-Muslim enemies. The historic march of Muslim armies into territories once under non-Muslim rule was not jihad in the religious sense of the term but an outcome of the power struggle to which all political establishments, Muslim or non-Muslim, were subject.

This is further made clear by the fact that territorial expansion and military conquest did not always and necessarily mean conversion. Beginning with the early history of Islam, conversion through persuasion and 'calling' (*da'wah*) was encouraged, and a multitude of methods were put in place to facilitate the conversion of individuals and masses through peaceful means. Conversion by force, which would make Islam a proselytizing religion, however, was not imposed as a policy either by the ulama or the rulers. Furthermore, conversion was not a condition to become part of the Muslim community to gain religious freedom, receive protection, and posses property under the Islamic law. The considerably protean concept of the dhimmi allowed religious minorities to maintain their traditions and resist any attempts at forceful conversion. Since Islam does not ordain a missionary establishment, the agents of conversion responsible for the enormously successful and unprecedented spread of Islam were multifarious and extended from the Arab traders and the Sufis to the development of Islamic

communal institutions.[41] Otherwise we cannot explain the *en masse* conversion of various ethnic, religious and cultural communities to Islam by the military prowess of a handful of Muslim groups in Anatolia, Iran, Africa or India.

Paradoxically, the policies of religious tolerance secured both the rights of religious minorities and the loyalties of new converts. In a manner that was simply unimaginable in the Christian kingdoms of Europe at the time, Jews, Christians, Sabeans, and Hindus had access to considerably high state posts from the time of Mu'awiyah (661-680) to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. Jewish and Christian scientists, physicians, accountants, counselors and statesmen were employed at Ummayad courts. St. John the Damascene, one of the most influential figures of Eastern Orthodox Church and the author of the earliest anti-Islamic polemics, and his father Ibn Mansur held positions under the caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705).[42] During the Buwayhid era in Persia, the vizier of the powerful Persian king Adud al-Dawlah (949-982), Nasr ibn Harun was a Christian.[43] We find similar cases in India

41 Cf. Richard Bulliet, "Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran" in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 30-51. See also the introduction by the editor, p. 9.

42 Cf. Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Ledien: E. J. Brill, 1972).

43 T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Delhi: Renaissance Publish-

and the Ottoman Empire where the vertical mobility of religious minorities in state affairs was a common phenomenon. Even the *devshirme* system of the Ottomans, which has been criticized and labeled as a form of forced conversion, provided religious minorities with unfettered access to the highest government positions. Three grand viziers of Suleiman the Magnificent, the most powerful Ottoman sultan, were of Christian origin: Ibrahim Pasha was a Greek and an able diplomat and commander; Rustem Pasha was a Bulgarian and had handled the treasury with utmost competence; and the celebrated Sokollu Mehmet Pasha was a Slav from Bosnia and had served in his youth as an acolyte in a Serbian church.[44] Among these, the case of Sokollu is probably the most interesting for it shows the extent to which the *devshirme* system eventually worked to the benefit of Christian communities under the Ottoman rule. Although Sokollu embraced Islam and became one of the most powerful men of his time, he kept close contact with his brother who was an important religious figure in Bosnia and helped him with his status as the grand vizier.

In the light of these points, we have to make a distinction between jihad as "just war" and jihad as "holy war"[45], which

ing House, 1984; originally published in 1913), pp. 63-4.

44 Cf. Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1977), p. 259.

45 Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, "The Development of Jihad in Islamic Revelation and History", in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword*, p. 36.

brings us to our third issue. Just war refers to a community's right to defend itself against aggression and oppression. It is defensive in nature whereas "holy war" entails converting everybody into one's religion by force, armed struggle, territorial expansion, and other means. In the first sense, jihad is an extension of the *jus ad bellum* tradition and can be seen as a necessity to protect justice, freedom and order. In this regard, the position taken by the Qur'an and the Prophet concerning the use of force against oppression by Muslims and non-Muslims alike[46] is essentially a realist one and aims at putting strict conditions for regulating war and using force. The guiding principle is that of fighting against aggression, which is ﴾*to fight in the way of God*﴿, and not to be the aggressors: ﴾*Fight* (*qatilu*, lit. "kill") *in the way of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits. Verily, God does not love aggressors*﴿ (Al-Baqarah, 2:190; Cf. also Al-Nisa', 4:91 and Al-Tawbah, 9:36). Both the classical and modern commentators have interpreted the command ﴾*not to transgress* (*la ta'dadu*)﴿ as avoiding war and hostilities in

46 On the question of rebellion and irregular warfare (*ahkam al-bughat*) in Islamic law, see Khaled Abou el Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a shorter synoptic account, see ibidem, "*Ahkam al-Bughat*: Irregular Warfare and the Law of Rebellion in Islam" in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, ed. by James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 149-176.

the first place, resorting to armed struggle only to defend one's freedom, and, once forced to fight, sparing the lives of noncombatants that include women, children, and the elderly.[47]

Contrary to what Khadduri claims[48], the global bifurcation of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* does not translate into a "holy war" nor a 'permanent state of war' between Muslims and non-Muslims. No figure can illustrate this point better than Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1327) whose views have been widely distorted and exploited to lend legitimacy to extremist interpretations of the classical Islamic law of nations. Even though Ibn Taymiyyah lived through the destruction wrought upon the Islamic world by the Mongols and could have been ex-

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47 Imam Shawkani, *Fath al-qadir*, abridged by Sulayman 'Abd Allah al-Ashqar (Kuwait: Shirkat Dhat al-Salasal, 1988), p. 37; *Le Coran: "Viola le Livre… "* French translation and commentary by Yahya 'Alawi and Javad Hadidi (Qom: Centre pour la traduction du Saint Coran, 2000), pp. 318-9; Muhamad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Maktaba Jawahar ul uloom: Lahore, n.d.), p.41; Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an*, tr. by A. Shamis (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), pp. 18-9.

48 In his *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955) Majid Khadduri goes so far as to translate jihad as 'warfare' (p. 55) and 'permanent war' (p. 62), and claims that "the universalism of Islam, in its all-embracing creed, is imposed on the believers as a continuous process of warfare, psychological and political if not strictly military" (p. 64). This belligerent view of jihad is hard to justify in the light of both the legal and cultural traditions of Islam discussed below.

pected to take a more belligerent stance against the 'infidels', he was unequivocal in stating that Muslims could wage war only against those who attacked them. The idea of initiating unprovoked war to convert people to Islam, namely to engage in 'holy war', belies the religion itself because, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, "if the unbeliever were to be killed unless he becomes a Muslim, such an action would constitute the greatest compulsion in religion", which would be contrary to the Qur'anic principle that "there is no compulsion in religion" (Al-Baqarah, 2:256).[49] Ibn Taymiyyah's famous student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah reiterates the same principle when he says that "fighting (*qatl*) is permitted on account of war (*harb*), not on account of disbelief (*kufr*)".[50]

This extended meaning of jihad as *jus ad bellum*, i.e., armed struggle in self-defense can also be seen in the anti-colonialist resistance movements of the modern period. In the 18th and 19th centuries, calls for jihad were issued across the Islamic world to fight against colonialism. For the anti-colonialist resistance movements of this period, jihad functioned, first, as the religious basis of fighting against colonialism and, second, as a powerful way of mobilizing people to join the resistance forces. Among others, the Barelvi family in India, Shaykh Shamil in Chechenya, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir

49 Ibn Taymiyyah, "Qa'idah fi qital al-kuffar", from *Majmu'at rasa'il*, p. 123, quoted in Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations*, p. 59.
50 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimmah*, ed. by Subhi al-Salih (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li'l-alamin, 1983, 3rd edition), Vol. I, p. 17.

al-Jazairi in Algeria, the Mahdi family in the Sudan, Ahmad 'Urabi in Egypt, and the Sanusiyyah order in Libya fought against European colonial powers.[51] It was during this period of resistance that jihad took a cultural tone in the sense that the fight against colonial powers was seen as both a military and religio-cultural struggle. Despite the enormous difficulties faced by Muslim scholars, leaders, merchants, and villagers in Egypt, Africa, India and other places, the jihad calls against the European armies did not lead to an all-out war against local non-Muslim communities. Even in cases where the Muslim population had to bear the full brunt of colonialism, extreme care was taken not to label local non-Muslims as the enemy because of their religious and cultural affiliation with European colonial powers. When, for instance, the Sanusi call for 'jihad against all unbelievers' caused a sense of urgency among the Christians in Egypt, Muslim scholars responded by saying that jihad in Libya was directed at the Italian aggressors, not all Westerners or Christians.[52]

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51 Cf. John Voll, "Renewal and Reform" in John Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

52 Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), p. 86. Peters' work presents an excellent survey of how jihad was reformulated as an anti-colonialist resistance idea in the modern period. See also Allan Christelow, *Muslim Law Courts and the French Colonial State in Algeria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) for the struggle of Muslim jurists to continue the tradition of Islamic law under the French colonial system.

Since jihad as armed struggle was fought against the invasion of European powers, it was not difficult for it to take religious and cultural tones. Napoleon's attempt to paint himself as a 'defender of Islam' when he invaded Egypt in 1798, for instance, was seen by the celebrated Egyptian historian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1754-1825) as no more than outright lies expected only from an 'infidel' (*kafir*). In his letter to local Egyptian leaders, imams and scholars, Napoleon said that he "more than the Mamluks, serve[s] God – may He be praised and exalted – and revere[s] His Prophet Muhammad and the glorious Qur'an" and that the "French are also faithful Muslims".[53] For Jabarti and his generation, this was yet another fact confirming the necessity of launching jihad against the 'afranj' (the French, i.e., Europeans). This sense of jihad as anti-colonialist struggle has not completely disappeared from the minds of some Muslims in the post-colonial period. In fact, the modern calls for jihad as 'holy war' by such Muslim extremists as Abd al-Salam Faraj who wrote the celebrated *al-Faridat al-ghai'bah* ("The Neglected Duty")[54] presumably justifying the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981, and Osama bin Laden are as much the product

53 *Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation*, tr. by Shmuel Moreh (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), p. 26.

54 Faraj's treatise has been translated by Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 160-230.

of their strict and a-historical reading of the classical Shari'ah sources as the legacy of colonialism.

Lastly, I would like to turn briefly to the status of religious minorities under Islamic law. As mentioned before, the dhimmi status granted the religious minorities and especially Jews and Christians under Muslim rule some measure of economic and political protection, freedom of worship, right to own property, and, in some cases, access to high government positions. The religious-legal basis of the notion of the dhimmi goes back to the time of the Prophet. While the status of dhimmi was initially given to Jews, Christians, Sabians and Zoroastrians, its scope was later extended to include all non-Muslims living under Islam.[55] A similar course of action was followed in India when Muhammad b. al-Qasim, the first Muslim commander to set foot on Indian soil in the 8th century, compared Hindus to Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians and declared them as part of the ahl al-dhimma.[56] This decision, which was later sanctioned by the Hanafi

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55 There is a consensus on this point among the Hanafi and Maliki schools of law as well as some Hanbali scholars. For references in Arabic, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 85-86. For the inclusion of Zoroastrians among the People of the Book, see Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 72-76. Shafi'i considers the Sabeans, a community mentioned in the Qur'an, as a Christians group. Cf. Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam*, Vol. I, p. 92.

56 The incident is recorded in Baladhuri's *Futuh al-buldan*. Cf. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, p. 85.

jurists, was a momentous event in the development of the Muslim attitude towards the religions of India. This politico-legal ruling could be seen as laying the foundations of the Hindu-Muslim mode of cultural coexistence, which I shall discuss below.

That the Prophet and his companions were lenient towards the People of the Book is attested not only by the communal relationships that developed between Muslims and non-Muslims in Madina but also recorded in a number of treatises signed by the Prophet. The "Madinan Constitution" (*wathiqat al-madina*), for instance, recognizes the Jews of Banu 'Awf, Banu al-Najar, Banu Tha'laba and others as a distinct community with "their own religion".[57] Another treatise signed with the People of the Book of Najran reads as follows:

> They [People of the Book] shall have the protection of Allah and the promise of Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, that they shall be secured their lives, property, lands, creed, those absent and those present, their families, their churches, and all that they possess. No bishop or monk shall be displaced from his parish or monastery no priest shall be forced to abandon

57 The text of the Madinan treatise is preserved in Ibn Hisham's *Sirah*. It is also published in Muhammad Hamidullah, *Documents sur la Diplomatie a l'Epoque du Prophete et des Khalifes Orthodoxes* (Paris, 1935), pp. 9-14. For an English translation, see Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 206-9.

> his priestly life. No hardships or humiliation shall be imposed on them nor shall their land be occupied by [our] army. Those who seek justice, shall have it: there will be no oppressors nor oppressed.[58]

The privileges given to the dhimmis included things that were prohibited for Muslims such as breeding pork and producing alcohol, which were not outlawed for Christians. The religious tax called *jizya* was the main economic responsibility of the dhimmis under the Shari'ah. Contrary to a common belief, the primary goal of the jizya tax was not the 'humiliation' of the People of the Book. While many contemporary translations of the Qur'an translate the words ﴾*wa hum al-saghirun*﴿ as "*so that they will be humiliated*", Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, who has written the most extensive work on the People of the Book, understands it as securing the allegiance of the People of the Book to laws pertaining to them (*ahkam al-millah*). Instead, ﴾*wa hum al-saghirun*﴿ should be understood, says Ibn Qayyim, as making all subjects of the state obey the law and, in the case of the People of the Book, pay the jizya.[59]

According to Abu Yusuf, one of the foremost authorities of the Hanafi school of law, *jizya* was "48 dirhams on

58 Quoted in Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 179. The original text of the Najran treatise is quoted in Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj* and Baladhuri, *Futuh al-buldan*.

59 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimmah*, Vol. I, p. 24.

the wealthy, 24 on the middle class and 12 dirhams on the poor ploughman-peasant and manual worker. According to Shafi'i, the jizya is one dinar for the poor and four dinars for the rich.[60] It is collected once a year and may be paid in kind, i.e., as "goods and similar property which is accepted according to its value".[61] Those who cannot afford to pay it are not forced to do so.[62] The exempted also include women, children, the elderly and the sick.[63] To the best of our knowledge, the *jizya* tax was not a significant source of income for the state[64], and it exempted the dhimmis from military service. In some cases, the *jizya* was postponed or abandoned altogether by the head of the state as we see in India under the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan.[65] The *jizya* was a compensation for the protection of the dhimmis by the state against any type of aggression from Muslims or non-

60 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimmah*, Vol. I, p. 26.

61 Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj*, p. 84. Cf. Shaybani, *Siyar*, in Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 143.

62 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimmah*, Vol. I., p. 32ff.

63 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimmah*, p. 42 and 49.

64 This is not to deny that there were examples to the contrary. When one of the governors of 'Umar 'Abd al-'Aziz asked permission to "collect huge amounts of *jizya* owed by Jews, Chrsitans and Majus of al-Hira before they accepted Islam", 'Abd al-'Aziz responded by saying that "God has sent the Prophet Muhammad to invite people to Islam and not as a tax collector". This letter is quoted in Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj*, p. 90.

65 Cf. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 80-1.

Muslims. This is attested by the fact that the poll-taxes were returned to the dhimmis when the Muslim state had been unable to provide the security of its non-Muslim minorities.[66] In most cases, the jizya was imposed not as individual tax like the kharaj but as collective tribute on eligible dhimmis.[67]

While Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's famous work on the dhimmis contains many rulings that present a condescending view of non-Muslims and advocate policies of humiliation against them[68], many other jurists were insistent on treating the dhimmis with equity and justice. As people "under the protection of the Prophet", Jews, Christians and other religious minorities were not to be forced to pay more than they could afford nor to be intimidated and oppressed because of their religious affiliations. Advising Harun al-

66 Abu Yusuf mentions the case of Abu 'Ubaydah returning the *jizya* to the dhimmis of Hims when he was not able to provide protection for them against the Roman emperor Heraclius. Cf. the letter by Abu 'Ubayadah mentioned by Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj*, p. 150.

67 Cf. Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 188-9.

68 These include some restrictive rulings on what the People of the Book could wear and what religious symbols they could display. Cf. A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), Chapters VII and VIII. As Tritton notes, however, such rulings were not implemented strictly and displayed considerable variety across the Islamic world. A case in point, which Tritton mentions (p. 121), is Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi who had some Christian officers working for him without following any strict dress code.

Rashid (d. 803), the famous Abbasid caliph, on the treatment of the dhimmis, Abu Yusuf exhorts him to "treat with leniency those under the protection of our Prophet Muhammad, and not allow that more than what is due to be taken from them or more that they are able to pay, and that nothing should be confiscated from their properties without legal justification".[69] In making this strong advice to the Caliph, Abu Yusuf narrates a tradition of the Prophet in which the Prophet says that "he who robs a dhimmi or imposes on him more than he can bear will have me as his opponent". Another well-known case is the execution on the order of the Prophet of a Muslim who had killed a dhimmi. In response to this incident, the Prophet has said that "it is most appropriate that I live up fully to my (promise of) protection".[70]

These and other rules concerning the dhimmis show that Islam accepts the reality of the 'religious other' in terms of a *de jure* reality rather than as a matter of political exigency. The underlying principle behind this attitude of accommodation is that the interests of human beings are served better in peace than in conflict. To reveal the extent of the Islamic theology of peace and cultural pluralism, we need to look at the cultural attitudes and practices of Muslim societies vis-à-vis other communities, to which we now turn.

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69 Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 85.

70 Quoted in Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, p. 40.

The Socio-Cultural Context: Confrontation, Coexistence, and Peace

Islam does not prescribe a particular form of cultural identity. There are both doctrinal and historical reasons for this. The absence of a central religious authority or clergy in the Islamic tradition preempts authoritarianism as a model of negotiating religious affairs in the public sphere. This is attested by the multiplicity of schools of law as well as the notorious differences of opinion among them. This fact, often stated by Muslims with a sense of pride, however, does not negate the presence of established and commonly accepted views in the Islamic tradition. Assuming that there is a set of beliefs and practices that we may legitimately consider as mainstream and orthodox, it is based on the consensus of the community over the generations rather than a centralized body of legal rulings. The incremental process of establishing orthodox etiquettes is not the monopoly of the *ulama*. Rather, it is shaped by a multitude of social agents that include men of letters, dervishes, saints, 'heretics', bards and folk singers, storytellers, political leaders, rulers, scientists, artists, traders, diplomats, philosophers, and theolo-

gians. While it is true that the dissemination of religious authority on the one hand and the malleability of cultural expressions in Muslim societies on the other has challenged centralism and authoritarianism, it has also raised the question of legitimacy and authenticity. Some including the Wahhabis and some Orientalists have called this a deviation from the norms of the religion, arguing that Islamic history has been not so much 'Islamic' as antinomian. Even if we admit that there are presumably overt discrepancies between what the ulama envision as a perfect Shari'ah society and the cultural practices of Muslim societies, it is a healthy tension and functions as a mechanism of checks and balances against the strictly text-based, relatively abstract, and reductively legalistic approach of the jurists.

In creating their cultural orthopraxies, Muslim communities were functioning within the framework of the ethical universalism of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'anic call to enjoin what is good and praised (*ma'ruf*) and forbid what is morally evil and disliked (*munkar*) is not a culture-specific injunction. It is addressed to all peoples regardless of their religious affiliations. The Prophet is considered a perfect example (*uswah hasanah*) for all humanity in his fight against all that is evil and oppressive and in defense of all that is praiseworthy and virtuous, whatever their origin might be. The notion of ﴾*middle community* (*ummah wasatah)*﴿ (Al-Baqarah, 2:143) supports the same ethical universalism: ﴾*And thus We willed you to be a community of the*

middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you﴿ (M. Asad's translation). The aim of this ethical-spiritual universalism is to create an open society based on moral values, not on the received traditions of one tribe, city, or nation. This is in tandem with the fact that the Qur'an positions itself against the cultural localism and tribal parochialism of pre-Islamic Arabia – a rule that has been an invariable factor in the rapid spread of Islam outside the Arabic cultural zone. Once established as major cultural units, Muslim societies articulated this ethical universalism into various societal mechanisms by which the ideal of creating a virtuous and just human habitat could be realized. The politics of gaining status and social ascendancy in the Islamic context is thus based on the acquisition of two universal qualities: knowledge (*ilm*) and virtue (*fadilah* and *ihsan*). Both of these qualities are implicit in the Qur'anic notion of *taqwa* (Al-Hujurat, 49:13), God-consciousness, which is the ultimate criterion of 'nobility' among people. In a broad sense, this forms the basis of an Islamic meritocracy whereby every member of the society is urged to contribute to the creation of a moral and just social order. As the few examples below will show, the Muslim philosophers and scientists regarded seeking knowledge and leading a virtuous life as the basis of their interest in other cultures and traditions.

Historically, as the borders of the Islamic world expanded outside and beyond the Arabian Peninsula, Muslims became

heir to all of the major cultural traditions of the time. The Graeco-Roman heritage through the Byzantine Empire and the pre-Islamic Persian culture through the Sasanids were the first two important traditions that Muslims encountered in less than a century after the death of the Prophet. This was followed by Mesopotamian, Indian, black African, central Asian, Chinese, and finally Malay-Indonesian civilizations in the 15th and 16th centuries.[71] The rapid establishment of the different cultural zones of the Islamic world went hand in hand with the rise of the numerous schools of law, Kalam, philosophy, and Sufi orders, generating a remarkable tapestry of cultural diversity within and across the *dar al-Islam*.[72]

71 The major and minor religions that the Islamic world encountered throughout its history make up a long list: the religious traditions of the pre-Islamic (*jahiliyyah*) Arabs, Mazdeans in Mesopotamia, Iran, and Transoxania, Christians (of different communions like Nestorians in Mesopotamia and Iran, Monophysites in Syria, Egypt and Armenia, Orthodox Melkites in Syria, Orthodox Latins in North Africa), Jews in various places, Samaritans in Palastine, Mandaeans in south Mesopotamia, Harranians in north Mesopotamia, Manichaeans in Mesopotamia and Egypt, Buddhists and Hindus in Sind, tribal religions in Africa, pre-Islamic Turkic tribes, Buddhists in Sind and the Panjab, Hindus in the Panjab. Cf. J. Waardenburg, "World Religions as seen in the Light of Islam" in *Islam Past Influence and Present Challenge*, ed. by A. T. Welch and P. Cachia, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), pp. 248-9. See also J. Waardenburg, *Muslims and Others: Relations in Context* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

72 The six cultural zones of the Islamic world comprise Arabic, Persian, Turkish/Turkic, Indian, Malay-Indonesian, and African spheres of

In spite of occasional sectarian conflicts such as the *mihna* incident in the 3rd/9th century[73] or the Kadizade movement in the Ottoman Empire in the 10th/16th century[74], traditional Muslim societies succeeded in creating a stable and peaceful habitat in which both Muslim and non-Muslim members of the *umma* contributed to the cultivation of a world civilization in such diverse fields as arts, sciences, trade and architecture. The notion of cultural and religious co-existence that came about in this milieu was not merely based on the temporary absence of conflict and confrontation between Islamic and non-Islamic elements. Its positive character was nurtured and sustained by the inclusivist attitude of Muslims towards other cultures and religious traditions, which makes Islamic civilization simultaneously both Islamic and 'Islamicate'.[75]

culture where the expression of Islam as a religious and cultural identity has been more heterogeneous and complex than the Christian, Hindu or Chinese worlds. For a discussion of these zones, see S. H. Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003), pp. 87-100.

73 See for details, M.Hinds, "Mihna" in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edn., 7:26.

74 See Semiramis Cavusoglu, "The Kadizadeli Movement: An Attempt at Seri' at-Minded Reform in the Ottoman Empire" (Unpublished Dissertation; Princeton University, 1990). Also see Madeline C Zilfi, "Vaizan and Ulema in the Kadizadeli Era" Proceedings of the tenth Congress of the Turkish Historical Society (Ankara, 1994), pp.2493-2500.

75 Marshall Hodgson's suggestion of the term 'Islamicate' to express the hybrid and multifaceted nature of Islamic civilization is not completely without justification as many previously non-Islamic elements

There is a plethora of examples in the history of Islam to illustrate the cultural ecumenism of Muslim societies. We may begin with the attitude of Muslim philosophers towards pre-Islamic traditions of learning. For the early Muslim philosophers, scholars, and scientists, the search for truth was both within and beyond religious boundaries. The Prophet's famous exhortations to "seek knowledge even if it is in China"[76] and "wisdom is Muslim's lost [treasure]. He takes it wherever he finds it"[77] were frequently referred to by the philosophers of the intellectual sciences (*ulum aqliyyah*) interested in Greek-Alexandrian thought as well as the scholars of transmitted sciences (*'ulum naqliyyah*) specialized in such disciplines as hadith, Qur'anic commentary, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Even though some later scholars have opposed philosophical sciences, especially its strictly Aristotelian version, and defined knowledge (*al-'ilm*) as 're-

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were incorporated into Islamic civilization in a relatively short period of time. Cf. his *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974).

76 See, Al-Rabi' b. Habib al-Basari, Musnad al-Imam al-Rabi', Bab fi al-'Ilm wa talabih wa Fadlih. This is also narrated by Abu Bakr Aamad b. 'Amre al-Bazzar in his al-Bahr al-Zukhkhar also known as Musnad al-Bazzar (Beirut: Mu'assasat 'Ulum al-Qur'an, 1409 AH), 1:1775, where he claims that there is no foundation (asl) for this hadith.

77 Abu 'Isa Muhammad Tirmidhi, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-'Ilm 'an Rasul Allah, Bab ma Ja'a fi Fadl al-Fiqh 'ala al-'Ibadah; Ibn Majah, Sunan Ibn Majaj, Kitab al-Zuhd, Bab al-hikmah. This hadith has been transmitted in many hadith collections with some variations.*

ligious science', this did not obstruct the steady development of philosophy and science in the Islamic world. Contrary to Goldziher's attempt to present the critical views of certain Hanbalite jurists on the 'ancient sciences' (*'ulum al-awa'il*), meaning Greek philosophy and science, as the 'orthodox' Muslim position,[78] anti-intellectualism remained largely parochial to the traditionists (*al-muhaddithun*) who were as much opposed to the lore of pre-Islamic times as to Kalam and doctrinal Sufism. For the overwhelming majority of the Muslim intelligentsia, the universality of truth was the guiding principle and ground of their quest for knowledge. No one has stated this point better than al-Kindi, 'the philosopher of the Arabs'.

> We owe great thanks to those who have imparted to us even a small measure of truth, let alone those who have taught us more, since they have given us a share in the fruits of their reflection and simplified the complex questions bearing on the nature of reality. If they had not provided us with those premises that pave the way to truth, we would have been unable, despite our assiduous lifelong investigations, to find those true

78 Ignaz Goldziher, "The Attitude of Orthodox Islam Toward the "Ancient Sciences"" in *Studies on Islam*, tr. and ed. by M. L. Swartz, Oxford, 1981, pp. 185-215. For an important criticism of Goldziher's conceptualization, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 166-171.

> primary principles from which the conclusions of our obscure inquiries have resulted, and which have taken generation upon generation to come to light heretofore.[79]

That al-Kindi's attitude in the above quote was emblematic of his generation and later Muslim scholars is attested by Sa'id al-Andalusi who has divided nations (*umam*) according to their contribution to knowledge and science (*al-'ilm*). He states this point in unequivocal terms when he says that

> we have determined that all nations, in spite of their differences and the diversities of their convictions, form *tabaqatayn* [two categories]. One *tabaqah* has cultivated science, given rise to the art of knowledge, and propagated the various aspects of scientific information; the other *tabaqat* did not contribute enough to science to deserve the honor of association or inclusion in the family of scientifically productive nations.[80]

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79 Ya'qub b. Ishaq Al-Kindi, *Rasa'il*, I, p. 97, quoted in Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 70

80 Sa'ib b. Ahmad al-Andalusi, *Science in the Medieval World "Book of the Categories of Nations"* (*Tabaqat al-umam*) translated by S. I. Salem and A. Kumar, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1991), p. 6.

The belief that truth transcends the contingencies of history was the conviction of educated classes across the Islamic world as they studied the countless schools of thought, both Islamic and pre-Islamic, producing an extensive literature on the history of ideas. The long list of scholars interested in intellectual history before and after Islam included, *inter alia*, Ibn al-Qifti, al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik, Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani, Sa'id al-Andalusi, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Jahiz, and Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah as well as such major writers of the *Milal* tradition as Shahrastani, Baghdadi and Ibn Hazm.[81] Among these works, the Egyptian *amir* Abu al-Wafa al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik's *Mukhtar al-hikam wa mahasin al-kilam* was noticed very early by medieval Europeans, translated into Latin and other languages, and, in fact, became the first book printed by William Caxton in England in the 15th century as *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*.[82] The continuity of humanity's search for truth had a normative value for most of these writers in that their quest for knowledge was part of a larger tradition to which ev-

81 Cf. Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 25-51.

82 The Arabic text of *al-Mukhtar* has been edited by A. Badawi (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1980, 2nd edition) and the original English translation by Curt F. Buhler (London: Oxford University Press, 1941).

> ery seeker of knowledge belonged. When Hasan ibn Sahl, for instance, was asked why he always invoked the views of those who came before him (*kalam al-awa'il*), he answered that "because it [i.e. those views] has been passed down before us; had it been unworthy and imperfect, it would have never reached us and gained [universal] approval.[83]

The concept of "perennial philosophy" (*al-hikmat al-khalidah*) enjoyed a similar prestige due to the same notion of truth and its persistence in history. Suhrawardi, the founder of the school of Illumination (*ishraq*) made a strong case for the perennity of certain philosophical questions and the answers given of them when he said that

> do not think that wisdom has existed only in these recent times [i.e., the pre-Islamic Persian and Greek philosophers]. No, the world is never bereft of wisdom and the person who possesses it with arguments and self-evident proofs. He is God's vicegerent on His earth, and this shall be so as long as the heavens and the earth exist.[84]

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83 Quoted in Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani, *Muntakhab siwan al-hikmah*, ed. by D. M. Dunlop (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), p. 3.

84 Shihab al-Din Yahya b. Habash al-Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (*The Philosophy of Illumination*), edited and translated by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999),

Apart from the sublime world of the intellectuals, the Islamic concept of cultural pluralism was extended to virtually all minorities living in the lands of Islam. The experience of *convivencia* among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Andalusia was a result of the Islamic notion of cultural inclusivism.[85] While the Jews of Europe were subject to woeful vilifications and persecutions during the middle ages, a major Jewish intellectual tradition had developed under the Muslim rule and included such prominent figures of medieval Jewish thought as Saadiah Gaon al-Fayyumi, Ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, Maimonides, Ibn Kammunah, Ibn Paquda, and Gersonides (Levi ben Gershom). This has resulted in a unique interaction between medieval Jewish philosophy on the one hand, and Islamic philosophy, Kalam, and Sufism on the other.[86]

In the subcontinent of India, a cultural syncreticism

p. 2.

85 For Andalusia, see Anwar Chejne, *Muslim Spain: Its History and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974) and Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Manuela Marin (eds.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992). For the concept of *convivencia* and the Jewish contributions to Andalusian civilization, see V. B. Mann, T. F. Glick, and J. D. Dodds (eds.), *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1992).

86 See, among others, Arthur Hyman, "Jewish Philosophy in the Islamic World" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, S. H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds.) (London: Routledge,), Vol. I, pp. 677-695 and Paul B. Fenton, "Judaism and Sufism", ibid., pp. 755-768.

developed between Hindu and Muslim cultures. From the translation of Indian astronomical works into Arabic as early as in the 8th century to Biruni's historic study of India and Amir Khusraw's formulation of an Islamic identity in the Indian cultural environment, a vast literature came into being, generating a unique mode of symbiosis between the two worlds at social, philosophical, and artistic levels. Perhaps the most important figure to illustrate this is Dara Shikuh (1615-1659), the famous Mughal prince and son of Shah Jahan. Dara Shikuh translated and authored two important works dealing with Hinduism from an Islamic point of view. He made a translation of the Bhagavat Gita and some fifty Upanishads into Persian as *Sirr-i akbar* ("Great Mystery"), which he interpreted in light of the school of Advaita-Vedanta or the non-dualism of Shankaracharya.[87] In making his case for the translation, Dara Shikuh says that he "read the Old and the New Testaments and the Psalms of David and other scriptures but the discourse on *Tawhid* found in them was brief and in a summary form". He then turned to the Upanishads "which is undoubtedly the first heavenly Book and the fountain-head of the ocean of monotheism, and, in accordance with or rather an elucidation of the Kur'an".[88]

87 Cf. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies*, pp. 191-6; Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), pp. 99-100.

88 From the Introduction to *Sirr-i akbar* quoted in *Majma'-ul-bahrain or the Mingling of the Two Oceans by Prince Muhammad Dara Shikuh*, translated by M. Mahfuz-ul-Haq (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1929), p. 13.

Dara Shikuh also wrote a treatise called *Majma' al-bahrayn*, referring to the Qur'anic verse 19:60, in which he attempted a monotheistic interpretation of Hinduism. In tandem with his 'universalist' outlook, he defined his work as "a collection of the truth and wisdom of two Truth-knowing (*haqq-shinas*) groups", referring to Muslims and Hindus.[89] In addition to Dara Shikuh, we may also refer to the 16th century Persian philosopher Mir Findiriski, who is reported to have met a number of Hindu mystics during his travels to India, and translated and wrote a commentary on the Hindu mystical and philosophical text *Yoga-Vasishtha*[90].

Such modes of cultural coexistence would have been impossible without the recognition of the diversity of cultures and societies as part of human existence. The Qur'an takes up this issue in several places. Working towards a common good is made conditional upon the existence of different communities:

> *Unto every one of you We have appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one an-*

89 *Majma' al-bahrayn*, p. 38.

90 Fathullaj Mujtabai, *Hindu Muslim Cultural Relations* (New Delhi, 1978), p. 82; Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* Vol. IV, pp. 257-8.

other in doing good works! (Al-Ma'ida, 5:48; also Hud, 11:118).

This theme is further developed in the following verse. This time the emphasis is on the civic responsibility of "knowing one another".

O humans! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware (Al-Hujurat, 49:13).

The examples from the history of Islamic culture that I briefly analyzed above are neither scarce nor contrary to the norm. Even though the fundamentalists, for lack of a better term, consider cases of cultural symbiosis and syncretism in the Islamic world as deviations from an idealized and essentially ideological construct of Islam, both the Islamic intellectual tradition and Muslim societies have envisaged peace as a cross-cultural and inter-communal value.

I have argued in the preceding pages that a proper discussion of the Islamic concept of peace takes us beyond the minimal definition of peace as absence of conflict, and certainly beyond the limited sphere of law. In a broad sense, the Islamic tradition has articulated a concept of peace that ex-

tends from metaphysics and cosmology to law and culture. We cannot possible understand the experience of Muslim societies with the cultural and religious other(s) without taking into account these elements. The relevance of this tradition for the present day Muslim world requires little explanation. Today numerous Muslim intellectuals, scholars and leaders from Bosnia, Turkey and Egypt to Iran, Malaysia and the US are engaged in constructing an Islamic political ethics that is compatible with the Islamic tradition as well as responsive to the challenges of the modern world. Questions of war and peace, communal violence, terrorism, international relations, constitutional and participatory democracy, pluralism, openness, civility and the attitude towards the religious other are being discussed from a multitude of perspectives, and the views expressed are by no means uniform and homogenous. There is, however, an emerging consensus on upholding peace as a value in itself regardless of the political state of Muslim countries and communities across the globe.

In conclusion, we should emphasize the significance of this consensus in the present context. Muslim communities can no longer address issues of conflict and violence without developing a proper ethics of peace. While most of the factional conflicts in the Islamic world can be resolved through non-violent means, the lack of a comprehensive discourse of peace supported by a network of scholars, intellectuals, leaders, activists, and state agencies, preempts the possibil-

ity of preventing communal strife and use of force. Conflicts in our age have become both local and global, making the distinction between the two a blurred one. We can no longer speak of local and national conflicts without considering their international implications nor can we ignore the impact of global trends and relations on local issues. The Kashmir problem or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict defies the conventional notions of inter-state and/or territorial disputes. This presents a particular challenge to contemporary Muslim political thought in its transition from the large political units of the empire and its constellation states to the current system of nation-states on the one hand, and globalization, on the other. It remains to be seen what the weakening of the nation-state model will bring to Muslim societies in their struggle to cope with the current challenges of economic and cultural globalization. Be that as it may, achieving a culture of peace is an urgent need for Muslim communities in their inter-communal relations as well as their relations with other societies.

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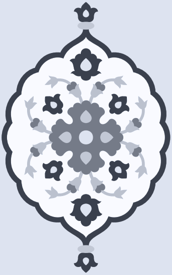
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